



The President's Daily Brief

April 2, 1976

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~~Top Secret~~

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April 2, 1976

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LEBANON

Leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt bowed to Syrian and Palestinian pressure yesterday and agreed to a ten-day truce. The cease-fire is scheduled to go into effect today.

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The ten-day limit was demanded by the leftists. During this period parliament is expected to amend the constitution and elect a new president, paving the way for President Franjiah's resignation. Amending the constitution should be completed quickly, but there will be intense haggling over the timing of Franjiah's departure and selection of his successor. Both Christians and leftists view Franjiah's replacement as a key element in future negotiations for a comprehensive settlement.

Ilyas Sarkis, governor of the central bank, is one of the front-runners to replace Franjiah. He is favored by the Syrians and the Christian Phalanges Party, but the leftists consider him too assertive. Another leading candidate is Raymond Edde, son of Lebanon's first president and leader of the third largest Christian political party. He has a broad following in parliament and among Muslim conservatives and some leftist groups. The conservative Christians and Syrians consider him an unpredictable maverick.

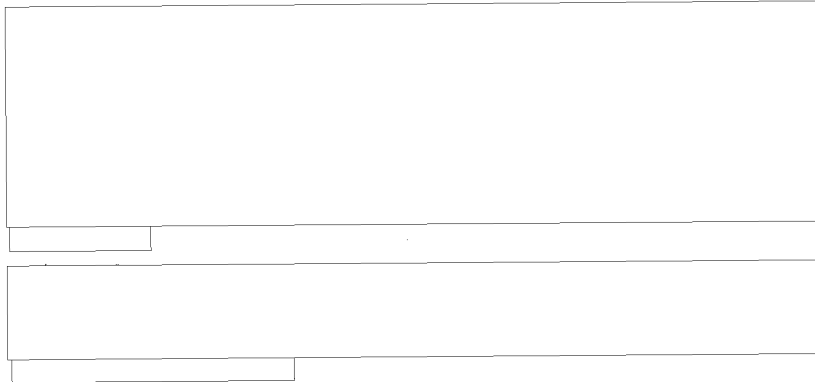
Jumblatt is a member of parliament but controls few of its 99 votes. If a stand-off develops between Sarkis and Edde, he might be able to deny both the required majority and force the chamber to select a weak, compromise candidate.

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*In recent days the Soviets have
weighed in more heavily in support of a
Lebanese cease-fire.*



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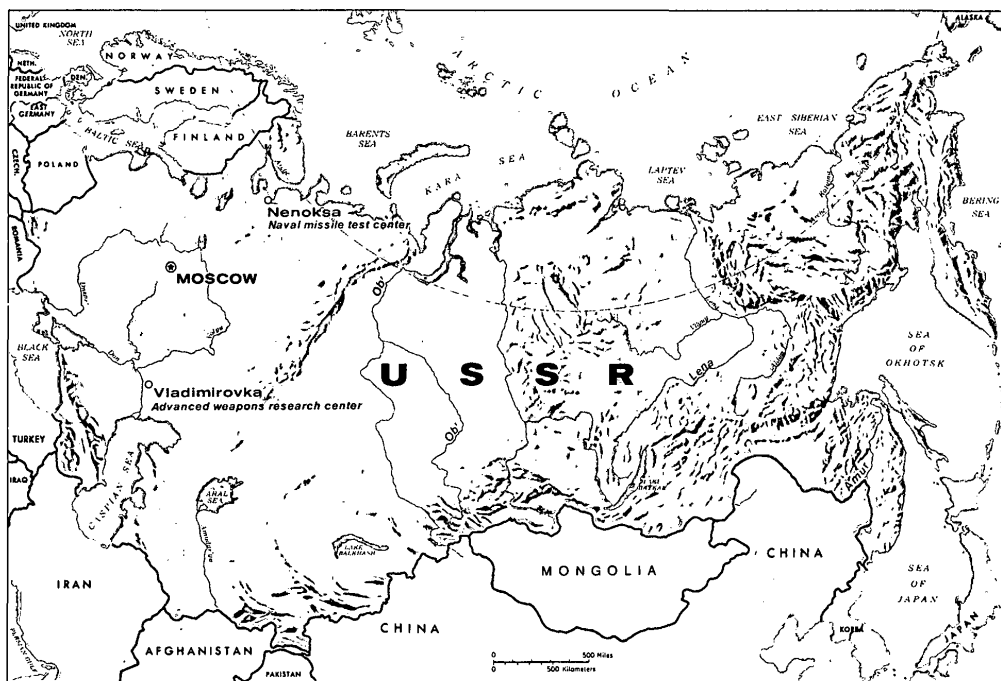
The Soviets are supporting the Syrian efforts because they recognize the Lebanese situation could touch off a larger Middle East conflict. Recent appeals by Damascus to the West to acquiesce in a Syrian intervention, as well as signs of deeper US involvement in the crisis, may have also stimulated the intensified Soviet activity.

In addition, Moscow does not want a setback to Syrian President Asad's prestige, particularly at a time when its problems with Sadat have intensified. It may also be concerned that a Syrian failure could lead to instability in Damascus, with uncertain consequences for the Soviet position there.

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USSR

Recent Soviet statements suggest that they may develop long-range cruise missiles if such weapons are not limited by a new strategic arms agreement.

We have no clear evidence that they have started working on long-range cruise missiles, but activity at two test centers may be related to the development of such weapons. Recent photography of the Nenoksa naval missile test center suggests that the Soviets started work on two structures that appear to be cruise missile launchers in late 1974. A separate program could be under way at the Vladimirovka advanced weapons research center where a new vehicle--apparently a cruise missile--was photographed on a launch pad in October and again in January and February.

While this vehicle could be a long-range cruise missile, it could also be a reconnaissance vehicle, a drone, or a mock-up. Until a flight test is observed, we cannot determine its character.



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EGYPT-USSR

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UK-RHODESIA

London's latest initiative to get the Rhodesian negotiations going again is not likely to get very far.

The proposal calls for expeditious negotiations on the shape of a new Rhodesian government and a transition period of no more than one or two years leading to majority rule.

The African presidents who have been backing the Rhodesian nationalists probably at least privately will welcome any new British initiative that might avert a guerrilla war. It is doubtful, however, that even they could organize the quarreling Rhodesian nationalists into a cohesive negotiating team capable of dealing with Prime Minister Smith.

Smith, for his part, is almost certain to reject the British package unless Prime Minister Vorster states publicly that further South African support for the Salisbury regime is contingent on prompt resumption of negotiations. Vorster is increasingly anxious to head off a liberation war in Rhodesia that might lead to Soviet or Cuban intervention. Nevertheless, it is doubtful that he is prepared to try to force Smith to agree to surrender on the issue of white rule in Rhodesia.

London is probably not very optimistic about the prospects for its initiative, but it feels a legal and moral obligation to try to break the deadlock while there is still time for a peaceful settlement.

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Chinese Egypt

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Differences over Italy's abortion law threaten the stability of Prime Minister Moro's Christian Democratic minority government.

Most legislators want to compromise, but their efforts were dealt a severe blow yesterday when the Christian Democrats forced through a provision opposed by all the major parties. The parliamentary leader of the Social Democrats, whose votes Moro needs, has already recommended that his party reconsider its support for Moro; their defection would topple the government. In view of the current fragmented condition of Italian politics, another government would be very difficult to patch together. Under these circumstances President Leone would be compelled to dissolve parliament and schedule early elections.

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